

Idaho Lieutenant Governor Brad Little
The Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future
Denver, Colorado
September 13, 2011

Members of the Commission, my name is Brad Little, and I am Lieutenant Governor of the State of Idaho. I am pleased to be with you today at this first public meeting to review the BRC's draft report to the Secretary of Energy. The State of Idaho has a vested interest in this issue, and we want to provide guidance, feedback and input throughout this process and whenever it will be beneficial to your work.

First, let me tell you how appreciative we are that that you have recognized the important role that sovereign states must play in this process. To this point, you are to be commended for the way you have involved the states – and this first hearing in the West is even being held in conjunction with the Western Governors Association. Our Governor, Butch Otter, is the immediate past chairman of WGA, and I think it is safe to say that he and the governors of all of these Western states are appreciative of the inclusive process we've seen so far.

It is not lost on any of us at the state level that you've done your best to make inclusiveness one of your guiding principles in this process. We're pleased that the very first recommendation you make to the Secretary accommodates "all affected units of government" in order to "sustain the public trust and confidence."

The State of Idaho's message is simple.

The Blue Ribbon Commission has drafted a solid set of recommendations, and Idaho feels the prudent implementation of those recommendations is best realized by leveraging existing federal investments and assets rather than by attempting to create new resources during very difficult economic times. In Idaho, we have the people, infrastructure and capabilities in place – along with established research program leadership – to support many of the needs described in the recommendations. We stand ready to assist.

Before your public comment period closes later this year, the State of Idaho will provide more detailed, technical comments on specific recommendations, but let me highlight some of the key points we'll be making in the coming weeks.

Recommendation 2 suggests a new organization to implement the waste management program.

While the authority to act independently is important for any new organization like this to succeed, many enabling resources already exist. If a new organization is formed and charged with "undertaking research, development and demonstration (RD&D) activities directly relevant to its waste management mission," it should seek first to leverage the used fuel handling, management, transportation and storage expertise resident at Idaho National Laboratory. Additionally, the cleanup program at DOE's Idaho Site is one of the best-performing in the nation, with a proven record of meeting milestones and safely storing and disposing of nuclear materials and waste.

Those same INL people and facilities can and should be key to the success of Recommendation 5. In fact, the executive summary begins its Recommendation 5 with the words, “Safe and secure ...” Those are the watchwords of the men and women of Idaho National Laboratory – the nation’s lead nuclear research and development laboratory – whose job it is to conduct the research that will make all aspects of nuclear energy safer and even more secure than it already is.

As the State of Idaho develops and submits its formal comments, we will focus on Recommendations 6 and 7.

As a state, we believe that energy independence is an issue of national security and that we can address our energy security challenges in an environmentally responsible way.

The pursuit of energy independence also means the creation of more jobs in this country, and for those efforts to be successful, a qualified workforce is needed. Idaho is home to an established nuclear energy research workforce and programs to educate the next generation of nuclear technicians, scientists, engineers and professionals. It has built robust education programs to keep this pipeline of workers filled.

Leverage Idaho’s knowledge and expertise, and let Idaho help the nation.

Finally, in the global issues surrounding nuclear energy, the report’s final recommendation recognizes the need for the United States to regain its leadership position on safety, non-proliferation and security/counter-terrorism issues.

Our nation has already made significant investments in people and infrastructure to reach that goal. As you know from the subcommittee’s hearing in Idaho Falls last year, INL applies both operations and scientific expertise to provide materials and process security, signatures and detection, advanced nuclear energy safeguards and policy, and radiological/nuclear training, testing and evaluation solutions and services to the national and international communities.

In summary, we want to commend you for your good work and inclusive processes. As a state, we would encourage you to continue to leverage distinctive assets already in existence, before creating anew. In Idaho, our universities and research institutions, our business community, and our national laboratory stand ready to assist. On behalf of Governor Otter and myself, I thank you for your time and we look forward to submitting formal comments.